THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI RAM NIWAS MIRDHA): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) Efforts are being made to achieve an objective of increase of number of public telephones to 5 percent of equipped capacity of exchange system in the country progressively during the Seventh Plan period.

Import of Soda Ash

664. SHRI B. SATYANARAYAN REDDY: Will the Minister of INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether the manufacturers of soda ash have made a representation to Government demanding immediate stopping of imports of Soda Ash; and

(b) if so, what measures Government propose to take to stop its imports and what is the policy of government to encourage the indigenous capacity for the manufacturers of soda ash?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE DEPARTMENT OF INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT (SHRI M. ARUNACHALAM): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) In view of the fact that the indigenous production is not adequate to meet the demand, at present the Government has no intention of stopping imports.

Soda Ash is open for licensing to all sectors of the industry. Proposals for setting up of additional capacity for the manufacture of Soda Ash are favourably considered by the Government.

Moonidih Coal-Mines Project

665. SHRI KAILASH PATI MISHRA:

SHRI SHANKER SINH VAGHELA:

SHRI ASHWANI KUMAR:

Will the Minister of ENERGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government's attention has been drawn to the news-item which appeared in the Statesman of 9th June, 1986 to the effect that the Bharat Coking Coal Limited Moonidih Coal Mines Project in Bihar would now cost Rs. 132.07 crores due to delay, instead of the original cost of Rs. 15.49 crores and may be completed in 1988; and similarly Eastern Coal Fields Limited's Chinakuri Coal Mine project may now cost 440 per cent more and suffer a time over-run of 103 per cent; and

(b) if so, what is the escalation in cost extent of time over-run regarding each delayed coal project and the total burden of additional cost on the national economy due to cumulative interest and loss in production?

THE MINISTER OF ENERGY (SHRI VASANT SATHE): (a) Yes, Sir. The revised Project Report of Moonidih Underground Project in the Bharat Coking Coal Limited was approved by Government in February, 1983 at an investment of Rs. 132.07 crores. Therefore, the Project is likely to be delayed by four years according to revised schedule and is now expected to be completed by March, 1989. In the case of Chinakuri Underground in the Eastern Coalfields Limited, the revised Project Report was approved in March, 1985 at an estimated cost of Rs. 45.54 crores for completion by March, 1989.